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## Paul Lindemann Funeral, 1938

O.P. Kretzmann

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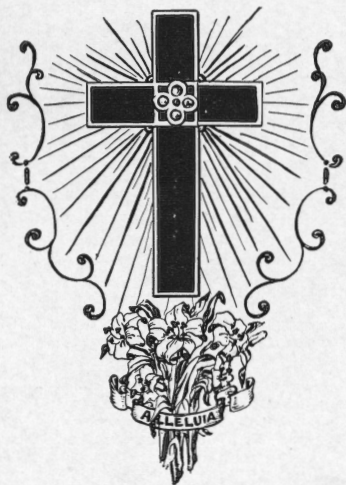
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# ( The Sermon )

Preached at the Funeral  
of  
**The Rev. Paul Lindemann**  
by  
THE REV. PROF. O. P. KRETZMANN



The Thursday after the Third Sunday in Advent

December 15, 1938



1881 - 1938

*St. Luke 2, 13-14: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."*

It is the last and supreme experience of the Christian heart to know the full and final meaning of the words which forever separate the mind of man from the mind of God: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." Only a heart surrendered to the wisdom of the Cross can understand the eternal wisdom which has made this house of God a house of mourning and of tears today. Surely all of us who had caught a brief glimpse of the dark valleys of suffering through which our father and friend in God had gone during these past two years had included in our wishes for Christmas in the year of our Lord 1938 the hope and prayer that God would give him a Christmas without the pain which had cast its shadow over his way these many days. And see! God has answered our prayer! As always in all the ages, in all life and death, not in our way, but in His; not in our wisdom, but in His; not in our darkness, but in His eternal light. It is Christmas for him now, forever and ever, and no tears and no sorrow can take it away from him again. Our poor, sin-darkened minds may rebel in burning and broken protest over what men will call his untimely death. Surely his Church needed him today more than ever before: The people of his parish

needed his hope and courage and faith for another Christmas: His wife and his son waited for him to come home for Christmas. And yet, our surrendered hearts must know today that though we loved him much, God loved him more. It was time for his eternal Christmas to begin. It was time for another voice in the choirs of heaven. It was God's time for him. If the hope and glory of Christmas ever meant anything to us who remain, they must mean everything now. I cannot understand this without Christmas. He lived and died in the light that streams from the Manger and the Cross. It is only in that blessed light that we can see beyond the clouds of our darkness and the storms of our tears, the glory of the heavenly wisdom that said "Come" when all our hearts and all our love said "Stay."

*"And suddenly there was with the angel the multitude of the heavenly host."* And suddenly! How much of the profound wisdom of God lies in that one word! And suddenly! Beyond the sudden glory in the midnight sky were all the plans of eternity for the redemption of men, the waiting of the ages, and the prayers of the prophets, priests and kings. And yet, when it came, it seemed sudden. There seemed to be no plan or purpose. One moment the sky was dark over Judea, and in the next it was radiant with the light that would never die. The fullness of time had come. In heaven the angelic choirs had been waiting for this moment since the foundations of the world. The plans of God were moving toward their appointed end. The hour had been fixed from all eternity. But to the trembling shepherds, children of the dust even as we, it seemed sudden. Only a few

waiting saints and a Virgin Mother knew that the eternities were in that moment and that the hands of God had set the clocks of the world for that hour.

Is that not always the way of God with men? Is that not His way with us who are here today? The homecoming of our father and friend in God seemed to come so suddenly. Despite his long illness we thought that his task on earth was not finished and his day was not done. And then—so suddenly for us who cannot see well—there was with him the multitude of the heavenly host, singing a song for him which we could not hear, a song of salvation and peace, of power and glory. The time for the beginning of that song had long been fixed in the silent counsels of God. We may not have been prepared for it, but he was ready and God was waiting. As always, since the seasons of life and death began, the love of God was stronger than all our love for him, and the song of the angels was more near and sweet than all our carols at Christmas. This we must know today. As the heavenly hosts came to the plains of Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago in God's good time—not a moment too soon or a moment too late—so they came to my father and friend in God. When our faith knows that, our mind begins to understand.

*"And suddenly there was with the angel the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest."* The greatest moment in the history of the angelic choirs had come. They were intoning the song of the redeemed of God. They were sounding the first note of the long pro-

cessional of those who would come out of great tribulation to join the Christmas choirs of heaven. From that moment until the very end of time—and even here today—every song on earth, carols and hymns and canticles, are only the momentary antiphons of the eternal hymn: "*Glory to God in the highest.*" Glory for the poverty of the manger, glory for the mystery of the incarnation, glory for the forgiveness of sins and the blessed assurance of an eternal Christmas before Him Whose manger was a throne!

Here, as nowhere else in the plans of God for men, the heavenly and the earthly worship meet. When all is said and done there can be only one song in heaven and on earth, on the lips of angels and in the hearts of men, in the Church at war and the Church at rest. And all of it is in the song of the angels over Bethlehem: "*Glory to God in the highest.*" Do we who remain here today want to sing the same song now being intoned by him who has gone before us? Then it must not be and cannot be a song of mourning and of pain. He no longer remembers the songs of our sorrowing hearts. He has only one task now and only one song. It is the same eternal Gloria which began on the plains of Bethlehem. I know that we are still on earth. Our tears will come. For a moment today the Gloria of the angels may become for us who remain the last and sweetest canticle of the waiting Church of God on earth: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!" But it must be only for a moment. Now, even now, our voices must join his, and the eternal Gloria sound through again, through life and time and death, through sorrow and pain and tears, until

in heaven and on earth there is only one song again, and we are singing it with him: "*Glory to God in the highest.*"

And yet there is another note in our songs of praise today. While it is the privilege of every Christian heart to give glory to God, it is in a very high and special sense the privilege of the ministers of Christ, the ambassadors of the King of kings. Our departed father and friend was a member of this great and noble company. He knew, as few men in our time have known, that his office carried the same high name and title borne by the messengers of heaven on Christmas Eve nineteen hundred years ago. He knew that his only purpose in life was to bring the angels' song to the lips of men silent with sin. In our song, "*Glory to God in the highest,*" there is today a note of praise and gratitude to the Lord of the Church for the heart, now still, which was so great a channel for the power of the spirit of God; for the thousands of men and women, some waiting for him there, others looking after him here, who will live in heaven because he lived on earth; for the hundreds of his brethren in the holy ministry whose life and work were challenged and illumined by his. I know that he would be the first to say that no part of our time here today should be devoted to a tribute to him; nor have I any desire to do anything so completely foreign to the great humility of his great soul. But our songs of praise today will strike a higher and clearer note if we remember that he was a great gift of God to His Church on earth. He was a preacher after the heart of God. The tides of divine mercy flowed through him as through few men in



our generation. Above all, he was a pastor, a shepherd of souls, with a constant, burning love for the people of his parish. Organizational loyalties and ecclesiastical problems disappeared before his consuming passion for the souls of men. Here was no ambitious churchman waiting for preferment or power. He was on the King's business, and he became one of those driven, surrendered souls who are in all the ages the hope of humanity and the glory of the Church of God. If our beloved Church today faces the second century of her existence in America with a clear knowledge of her problems and her tremendous opportunities in the land of her adoption, it is, under God, in no small measure due to the fact that God gave us a leader for such a time as this. His days on earth were too short for all his plans and dreams to come true, but he will see them come now from his place in the choirs of heaven. I know that he will, for his dreams were rooted in the will of the Eternal for His kingdom on earth. And so—for all of us, his wife and his son, the beloved people of his parish, his friends and companions in the Kingdom—there must be in the song, *"Glory to God in the highest,"* the deep undertone of devotion and rededication to the building of the eternal Kingdom in the little while that remains for us. His works will live after him.

*"And suddenly there was with the angel the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."* The heavenly messengers came from the place of peace where he has gone to bring their song of peace. It is almost forgotten now in a world full of pain and

anxiety and loneliness and loss and separation and the ashes of burnt-out fires, but it is the last and highest song for our hearts today. *"Peace on earth."* My father and friend knew that it was not the peace of armies after battle or the calm of the sea after storm or even the peace of sunset and evening star. He lived in the peace of Christmas from beyond the stars of heaven, the peace which he now knows forever. Would not that be his word for us today? Perhaps now—here—more than ever before, it is time for us to look up to Him from Whom all peace comes. How constantly our departed leader spoke of this peace to the hearts of men. He knew that men sought it desperately. He knew that one night it had been found where they would never have sought it—in the Child lying in a manger, in the lullaby of a Virgin Mother, in the song of angels above sleeping hills. He knew that here alone was peace, the peace of conscience and mind and heart which comes from the sure glory of our accomplished redemption. If he were still with us now, surely he would point our sorrowing hearts to the peace of Christmas, the blessed peace of God which passeth all understanding. Also today there will be no drying of our tears and no relief of the tearing pain in our hearts until the final glory of the peace of the angels and heaven falls sweet on the sick heart and the weary head: "My peace I leave with you."

*"Peace on earth!"* Today and tomorrow and forever! Peace for you, my dear mother in God, who bore the heat and burden of the day with him. Each Christmas on earth will only bring you nearer to him whom you loved here. Peace for you, my dear

brother, on whose shoulders has fallen the great tradition of a great man! Peace for you, my dear members of Redeemer Church, who are going toward eternity in the sure knowledge that your pastor is waiting for you there! Peace for you, reverend fathers and brethren, as you bring the message of the peace of Christmas to the warring hearts of men!

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
Glory to the newborn King!

In a few more days the world and the Church of God will ring again with the carols of Christmas. A beloved voice will be missing on earth. But the ranks of the heavenly choirs are stronger now. For a little while we shall sing antiphonally, he who has gone and we who remain. But only for a little while! Soon the Christmas choirs of heaven and earth will be united in the same eternal song: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*" Amen.

